



EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: CHALLENGES FACED AND SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 pandemic posed one of the greatest threats to global education. It has caused the gigantic learning crisis in global education as approximately 80 per cent of enrolled students were out of schools during pandemic. The world has experienced a biggest educational crisis ever as this pandemic has resulted in losses in learning, increase dropout rates and most of the poor children missed their most important meal of the day. Richer countries has managed the learning of students through online learning methods, but in middle-income and poor countries, the inequality in the opportunities between rich and poor students has been amplified. This pandemic has a profound negative impact on the learning of poor students and there is an urgent need of the efforts to reduce the negative impact of this pandemic on the learning of students in this post-pandemic period. This paper attempts to highlight the major challenges faced by developing countries during this pandemic by using a method of Document Analysis. Besides, the paper will also point out the suggestions based on innovations and best practices adopted in different countries to support quality primary and secondary education for all.

KEYWORDS: Covid-19, education, developing countries, SDG-4, learning loss.

INTRODUCTION:

Covid-19 pandemic is an ongoing global pandemic of Coronavirus Disease-19, first identified in December 2019 in China, which caused complete or partial lockdowns in almost all countries of the world. Due to these lockdowns, a lot of social and economic disruption have occurred. The various religious, political, cultural, social and economic activities have been postponed or cancelled. At present, the world have reported a total of 567,820,721 confirmed cases and 6,387, 702 deaths (<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/coronavirus-death-toll/>). The schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions were temporarily closed in an attempt to contain the spread of disease. Temporary closure of education institution has forced the students to stay at home and so face to face teaching-learning process was not feasible for approximately 80 per cent of the enrolled students. The international organizations, such as UNESCO and the World Bank, have suggested digital learning to reduce disruptions in the learning of the students. So, the governments and education institutions across the world were forced to adopt online learning in place of face to face teaching to reduce the threat to learning. At present, most of the educational institutions have been reopened but despite of that most of under-privileged students have lost their right to education. During pandemic, these students have no access to online learning and this gap in learning now emerged as a serious threat for education of these students in post-pandemic period.

CHALLENGES FACED DURING COVID- 19:

The whole world suffered a great loss during this pandemic, but from all the other aspects of life, education remained the most affected and most disturbed area due to Covid-19. In many developing countries, the education systems have been closed and face to face learning has been replaced with online learning (Hayat et al., 2021). The pandemic posed a higher risk to the education of under-privileged students such as poor students, girls etc. The most vulnerable students such as disabled children, children from poor households, girl students, students from ethnic minorities, refugees children etc, suffered more loss of learning in the pandemic as compared to other students (World Bank, 2021). The Global Education Monitoring Report 2020 highlighted that inclusive and equitable education is the core of 2030 Agenda because education has the potential to transform lives. The international efforts, starting from the Universal Declaration of Human Right 1948 until the Sustainable Development Goals, strongly advocated inclusion in education by providing equal access to and quality of education for all children. However, inequality based on gender, remoteness, wealth, disability, ethnicity, language, migration, religion, and other factors is a major challenge in the realisation of education for all goal. These factors are creating layers of exclusion for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sections of society and deepening the inequalities in the access and quality of education. Covid-19 is the recent addition to these factors of exclusion and this pandemic may put millions of children at the risk of learning losses and dropping out (UNESCO, 2020). More than 250 million children in India have been affected by Covid-19 and many of them were forced to drop-out (Mehta, 2021).

Regarding the consequences of recent Covid-19 pandemic, the Report pointed out that it forced the learners to spend more time at home and this is not conducive for learning. Education systems across the world are offering digital learning, yet this challenge seems to be too large to deal effectively. High-income countries used recent technology in online learning; however, poor and low-

income countries relied on television and radio programmes. Despite all these efforts, the continuity in learning has suffered due to forced lockdowns and this would increase the risk of marginalised children leaving school early. Already disadvantaged groups, such as girls, learners with disabilities and children from marginalised sections of society might get excluded from the schools. However, about 40 per cent of low- and middle-income countries have not supported learners at the risk of exclusion (UNESCO, 2020).

Saavedra (2020) pointed out the global learning crisis as the 80 per cent of enrolled students were out of schools due to pandemic (COVID-19) in March 2020. It has been pointed out that the world is experiencing a biggest educational crisis ever as this pandemic would result in losses in learning, increase dropout rates and most of the poor children missed the most important meal of the day. Richer countries has managed the learning of students through online learning methods, but in middle-income and poor countries, the inequality in the opportunities between rich and poor students will be amplified. This pandemic will have a profound negative impact on the learning of poor students and there is an urgent need of the efforts to reduce the negative impact of this pandemic on the learning of students.

UN News (2020) has pointed out the startling disparities in online learning during the Covid-19 lockdown in 191 countries. It has been highlighted that 1.5 billion students across the world were forced to stay home due to the spread of pandemic (Covid-19) and closure of schools due to lockdown conditions. Furthermore, governments and education institutions are forced to adopt online learning in place of face to face teaching to reduce the threat to learning. However, it has been found that half of these students did not have access to computers or the internet. The inequality in the access of online learning has been highlighted by the data which observed that approximately 90 per cent of students from Sub Saharan Africa have no household computers and more than 56 million students are living in areas which are not served by any mobile network. So, online learning for such students is a serious challenge and this inequality in the access of online learning will be a real threat to learning continuity of these students. Due to learning loss and many other problems, many of the students have developed mental problems during this pandemic (Toquero, 2020)

POSSIBLE SUGGESTIONS:

Covid-19 has drastically disrupted the education systems of developing countries and at present there is urgent need of concrete steps to reverse the damage done by this pandemic. The governments, along with international organizations, need to work together to eliminate or atleast reduce the inequality in education among rich and poor students. New ways of teaching and learning, especially for poor students, should be introduced in public and private schools so that the educational gap caused by pandemic can be covered. Remedial teaching should be planned in schools so that students can learn the content missed during pandemic period. The developing countries may introduce telephonic or other mobile services to address the difficulties of students such as Sri Lanka offered a good example in this case by introducing telephone service to help grade 11 students in science, mathematics and English. The developing countries should aim to ensure primary and secondary education for all the students with the help from private and social organizations to ensure the education for all. The para-teachers, training teachers and supporting technology can be used to ensure the

education of all children. Besides providing teaching and learning opportunities to students, the governments need to be clearer and more precise on the examination of these students. In most the cases, students undergo tremendous stress and anxiety due to delay in school examination. Many students lost their parents in this pandemic and their education is at risk. So, the governments and social organizations should work together to ensure the safety and education of these children. The developing countries should broadcast the educational content of primary and secondary classes through the every possible medium available so that the learning loss of students can be covered through these supplementary measures. Besides these measures, the governments need to ensure proper teaching and learning in public schools.

CONCLUSION:

Covid- 19 has disrupted the education ecosystem of all developing countries and due to this the world is off track to achieve quality primary and secondary education for all by 2030. The loss of learning, drop-outs, gaps in learning, inequality in education of rich and poor students and many such issues posed great challenges for the quality education of all students. However, in this post-pandemic period, the governments of various developing countries, along with social and private organizations, are working to reverse the damage done by Covid-19. High quality content of school education is being provided to students through various modes of learning such as face to face teaching, television programmes etc. Despite all the efforts, there is urgent need of remedial measures to ensure education for all. The governments also need to strengthen their public health systems to ensure proper physical and mental health of students.

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